

Re-entry Problem

It was announced the other day that former astronaut Donn F. Eisele is retiring from the military after 20 years of service. But instead of going to work for an aerospace firm, or into politics or into public relations for the railroads, as have other astronauts, Col. Eisele is going into the Peace Corps. "It's one of the most productive and most beneficial operations our Government has," the veteran of the Apollo 7 spaceflight remarked.

At first glance, the transition from the space program to the Peace Corps seems consistent, a symbolic linking of two major streams of American idealism and technical know-how. But there are other symbolic inferences to be drawn from the Colonel's new assignment. For that reason, and with all due respect to the sincerity of Col. Eisele's intentions, we think it would have been better if he had stayed away from the Peace Corps, and particularly from the assignment which will be his later this month — director of the Peace Corps in Thailand.

One problem the Peace Corps has faced from the very beginning has been the suspicion that its volunteers are in league with this country's military and the Central Intelligence Agency. For the Peace Corps to station retired military officers in foreign countries, even if they are retired astronauts, can only enhance such suspicions.

This is particularly so, we would imagine, in a country like Thailand, which is intimately linked to American involvement in Indochina

and the site of several bases from which American planes bomb North and South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. As a retired Air Force officer, Col. Eisele's assignment to that particular country will inevitably raise questions, in Thailand and elsewhere, about the possibility of a link between the Air Force and the Peace Corps.

In view of the potential for trouble in Col. Eisele's new assignment, it might not be a bad idea for someone in Washington to begin a little contingency planning for ways to gracefully scrub this mission.

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Why Censorship?

When will government officials learn that acting with discretion and covering up public business are distant cousins — if, in fact, there is any blood tie there at all?

In deleting from the record of a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing the information that a former CIA agent served for a short time with the Action agency, of which the Peace Corps is an adjunct, Sen. Claiborne Pell no doubt was motivated only by the best interests of the corps. The former agent's assignment was plain violation of agency policy.

Clearly, the matter was a delicate one for Joseph Blatchford, Action's director, who requested that it be kept confidential. Senator Pell's willingness to comply, however, even to the point of expunging the record of questions and answers exchanged in writing as official business, gave to a rather minor matter an aura of importance it would otherwise have lacked.

The senator originated the question, indicating that the reply might be of some importance. When the answer proved sensitive to the corps, and even more so, perhaps, to Mr. Blatchford, the veil of secrecy was drawn.

True, in one day of a senator's life, a thousand and one details offer him the option of speaking for the record or remaining silent. But since when are open hearings of a Senate committee subject to the censor's knife, the CIA and Mr. Blatchford notwithstanding?

The Big Lie

Soviet Style

This is the first in a series of four articles analyzing the Soviet Union's campaign to discredit the West and sow confusion with deception, fraud and forgeries.

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WASHINGTON — At No. 2 Dzerzhinsky Square, not far from the Kremlin in downtown Moscow, there's a rather ugly gray limestone edifice whose notoriety has been recorded in novel and news story.

It is the infamous Lubianka Prison building, the end of the line for many an important "enemy" of Stalin and his successors, but in czarist days the home of the Lubianka Insurance Co.

Since the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, the Lubianka has also served as headquarters of the dread Soviet secret police, the Cheka, when it was first set up under Felix Dzerzhinsky.

Today the secret police organization is known as the KGB or, more formally, the Committee of State Security, and one of its busiest arms is Department D of its first chief directorate, popularly called the Department of "Dezinformatsiya" (disinformation).

A more apt name, according to U.S. intelligence experts, would be "Department of Dirty Tricks."

The key function performed by Department D, which was created in late 1959, is to help prepare, carry out and monitor deception/disinformation operations — an effort directed primarily against the United States ("Glavni Vrag" or "Enemy No. 1") and its allies. It has a headquarters payroll of perhaps 60 to 75 experts of various types. Its chief for a number of years was the recently deceased Gen. Ivan Ivanovich Agayants.

Vasily Sitnikov, an expert on North Atlantic Treaty Organization affairs, was No. 2 and may have been advanced to acting chief.

Underscoring the importance is the fact that one of the most powerful groups in the USSR, the

Central Committee of the Communist Party, directly supervises its work. The schemes and themes of disinformation are planned by the party leaders and committee staff units handle the details. If forgeries are required, they are prepared by Department D experts or satellite intelligence services, often the East German and Czech.

The aim of the game is not simply to mislead and defame the Western powers but, through such weapons as phony "facts," fraudulent documents and false reports, to prompt them to take actions contrary to their own interests.

Richard M. Helms, director of Central Intelligence, has pointed out that the Russians "have a long tradition in the art of forgery." They produced the spurious anti-Semitic tract, "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," at the turn of the century.

Soviet forgeries began appearing in volume in 1957 and many of them have been aimed at American targets through a worldwide network.

"The CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) put these fakes under the microscope," Helms told the Senate Internal Security subcommittee when he was top aide to Allen W. Dulles at the agency. "We found that each Soviet forgery is manufactured and spread according to a plan. Each is devised and timed to mesh with other techniques of psychological warfare in support of Soviet strategy."

Helms listed three main purposes of the disinformation effort:

1. To discredit the West generally, and the United States and its government specifically, in the eyes of the rest of the world.

2. To sow "suspicion and discord" among the Western allies, especially between the United States and its friends.

3. To drive a wedge between the peoples of non-Soviet block countries and their governments by fostering the line that "these governments do not represent their citizens because they are puppets" of the United States.

The Soviets use a variety of types of documentary frauds, including the false news story, the distortion of a genuine document, the forgery, the fabrication of a document, and the use of a true account attributed to a nonexistent organization.

According to Helms, a number of tricks are "used by the Soviets to nurse a little 'plant' into a big lie." He cited a few:

"One is to print a local or planted rumor as a news article using both (Soviet) bloc and free world papers as outlets. Another is to lend the tale a seeming authenticity by replaying through bloc media stories attributed to the Western press. A third device is the allegation that the current Soviet charges are proven by secret Western documents — documents that do not even exist as forgeries."

The major Soviet disinformation themes charge that the United States is an imperialist power bent upon world domination; that it interferes in the affairs of independent countries and that it connives against its own allies.

To promote these themes, the Soviets have peddled some fantastic concoctions.

Would you believe Nelson A. Rockefeller sent a "letter" to President Dwight D. Eisenhower outlining a cynical plan for using U. S. military and economic aid to press a world domination goal?

How about an "agreement" between Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi of Japan "to permit use of Japanese troops anywhere in Asia?"

Or a "letter" from Dulles to the U.S. ambassador to Iran, in which the secretary made insulting remarks about the shah?

Perhaps a "letter" from Dr. Frank B. Berry, assistant secretary of defense for health, to Secretary of Defense Neil H. McElroy in 1958?

This one had Berry asserting that 67.3 per cent of all flight personnel in the U.S. Air Force were psychoneurotic, many showing phobias, "hysterical syndromes and fits of unaccountable animosity."

Berry also "reported" that studies of chronic overstrain of the nervous system among Strategic Air Command pilots and navigators indicated "excessive and systematic use of alcohol (quite often even in flight), use of narcotic drugs (particularly cigarettes containing opium and marijuana), and sexual excesses and perversions."

For good measure, this line was added: "Moral depression is a typical condition of all crew members making flights with atomic and H-bombs."

The forged Berry letter first surfaced in the East German newspaper Neues Deutschland in May, 1958, and then was replayed in other Communist organs.

Later Soviet disinformation projects pushed charges just as far out,

For example, a "letter" dated June 13, 1963, from Sargent Shriver, director of the Peace Corps, to the prime minister in Ethiopia dovetailed with the

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What's Future of Peace Corps?

At the tender age of 10, is the Peace Corps on its deathbed?

Since its inception in a speech by John Kennedy at 2 o'clock in the morning during the 1960 campaign, and its creation through an executive order by President Kennedy on March 1, 1961, the Peace Corps's popularity both at home and abroad has ebbed and flowed like the tides of the seas of nations around the world where Peace Corps volunteers have served.

When the Peace Corps's popularity was at its height, 45,653 people applied in one year. By 1966, there were 12,313 volunteers abroad.

By 1970, numbers of people applying had dropped to 19,002. On Dec. 31 of that year, only 7,770 volunteers were overseas.

The fact that volunteers now serve in more countries (61) than ever before is little balm to the realization the Peace Corps is in a state of decline from which it never may recover.

What happened? For one thing, Vietnam. More and more young Americans, the "idealists" of the college campuses who provided the bulk of volunteer applications, came to see the Peace Corps only as an arm of the government that perpetuated what they regarded as the folly of endless overseas involvement.

Then, too, the roles of the Peace Corps and of the military got mixed in the minds of many people in countries where volunteers were serving.

"The argument used most often by the volunteers, that the Peace Corps operated independently from the rest of American foreign policy, seemed valid enough for us," wrote Mark Dintenfass, former volunteer

in Ethiopia. "But for the Ethiopians, it was not at all convincing."

Communists in many countries took advantage of the confusion and spread rumors to the effect that the Peace Corps was an arm of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and could not be trusted.

The drop-out rate for volunteers zoomed. Frustrations of life in a small village were enough without having this added strain.

Other volunteers saw the Peace Corps as a convenient means of dodging the draft, and stayed in the organization just as long as they could. Idealism plummeted as the drop-out rate soared.

To meet the challenge of the drop in Peace Corps popularity on the home front as well as overseas, Director Joseph Blatchford (himself seen by many as a part of the problem due to the political overtones of his appointment by President Nixon) announced a policy of recruiting volunteers who had more than their idealism to offer, who might be able to impart actual farm or mechanical skills, for example, to people thirsting for such knowledge in the developing nations of the world.

It's too early to tell if Blatchford's strategy is working or not.

But despite its recent problems the spirit of volunteerism remains. Young people, old ones too, are going abroad and returning after two years' service to see their own country in a different light.

Putting the world, and one's own land, in perspective just may be what the Peace Corps is all about.

If it is, there's no real cause for concern for its future. Change in the organization was inevitable. It's the change in the individual and what he does with his new outlooks that count.

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Capital Briefs

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★ The Kremlin is stepping up its propaganda attacks on the Peace Corps, asserting that the agency is nothing but a tool for spreading "imperialist lies" to unsuspecting foreigners. Peace Corps director Joseph Blatchford is linked with the CIA and accused of foisting the "notorious American way of life" on foreign governments.